



Inside Ag

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Bug of the Month **Ceratapion Basicorne**



Yellow starthistle (YST) is a highly invasive noxious weed that covers over 20 million acres in the west. This weed ruins grazing lands and the spiny flowering heads turn patches of this weed into a painful nightmare. This plant causes hundreds of millions of dollars in agricultural losses every year.

Fortunately YST is not well established in Colorado and all known patches are scheduled for eradication. In other states, where YST has taken over millions of acres, biological control is the best solution.

The Palisade Insectary is cooperating with the USDA and the state of California to raise large numbers of a new biocontrol agent that may help suppress this weed. The agent is a small weevil that bores into the plant and eventually kills it by cutting off nutrient and water flow. The weevil is known as *Ceratapion basicorne* and it comes from Eurasia, where YST originated.



The Insectary receives financial support from the USDA in exchange for rearing this agent, but probably the biggest benefit to the citizens of Colorado will come from bringing YST under control in other states. Bringing YST under control

regionally will reduce seed sources and lower the chances for Colorado to be invaded by this extremely unwanted plant.

Photo by USDA